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TRANSACTIONS

THE CONGREGATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
EDITOR JOHN H. TAYLOR, B.D.
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Editorial

Dr. Erik Routley did our Society the honour of addressing our annual meeting, 5 May, in his year as President of the Congregational Church in England and Wales. A large number attended. The substance of his paper is printed below.

Mr. Harding's article in this issue is the firstfruits of his work on the Countess of Huntingdon's archives, which Dr. Welch catalogued at Churchill College. Dr. Welch's published List of College Papers shows that there is much source material on the last and this century as well as the Selina days. Mention in a previous issue of records to do with David Bogue (1750-1825) and the Gosport Academy prompts Dr. Nuttall to tell us that New College, London, has procured from Western College at its termination, half a dozen further volumes of Bogue's MS., lectures.

TWILIGHT OF PURITANISM

(This paper which was delivered to the Society on 5 May 1970 by the President of the Congregational Church in England and Wales has had to be reduced in length by the Editor).

What I aim to do in this paper is to bring together a number of propositions about English puritanism which I believe history to support, and consider what our age makes of them. And the first of these propositions is (1) that Puritanism is English. I do not mean Scottish or Welsh, but English.

I have been reading recently Gordon Rupp's great book on *Patterns of Reformation.* There are two historians whom above all others I read for pleasure as well as profit—Geoffrey Nuttall and Gordon Rupp. Dr. Rupp takes as one of his major subjects Andrew Karlstadt, whom he describes as 'Reformer and Puritan'. He contrasts the evangelicalism of Martin Luther with puritanism, evangelical liberty and legalism, and he says (p. 109) 'He (Luther) saw, and said, that it was a root error to turn the evangelical "may" into a legalistic "must". The difference between reformation and Puritanism lies in this distinction, and it shows itself in a difference of method and of timing. To rush in and abolish abuses by force, without preaching first . . . was to do injury to weak consciences, and to carry through a reformation only in outward things.'

My point (which is not an important point of controversy with Dr. Rupp) is that in ordinary speech it may be wise to speak of 'puritanism' only when one means an English culture, and to predicate it of any other culture only by analogy. It is the specific point of legalism in which Dr. Rupp finds intimations of puritanism in certain German contemporaries of Luther, and it is without doubt wise of Dr. Rupp to indicate that that is what they are—intimations, rather than evidences, of puritanism. And I hope myself that it is not a tiresome pedantry to suggest that when one speaks of puritanism *simpliciter* one should mean the full and complex flowering of that culture which is to be found first, and at its richest, in our own country.

I am sure that Dr. Rupp is right in his assessment of the relations between puritanism and the Reformation; the difference between my purpose here and his in his writings (to compare the inconsiderable with the august) is merely in that for me puritanism is a quite central and fascinating subject. I am particularly anxious not to misrepresent it, and if I am found to be doing so, I look eagerly for correction. But it seems to me that puritanism is not only English, but (2) a peculiarly English response to the Renaissance.

It was Dr. Rupp, I am bound to say, who drew my attention in 'The English Protestant Tradition' to the remark of Erasmus's biographer Huizinga, to the effect that the Erasmian picture of the good life was 'the good conversation of a group of friends sitting in a garden'[1]. Now Erasmus, it is sufficiently established, was an apostle of theological conversation: he appears to have spent his life doing little else but promoting and partaking in leisured and educated conversation with the best minds of his time—provoking controversy (as with Colet at Oxford[2]), but stimulating intellectual vitality wherever he was. And I am going to suggest to you that English puritanism owes as much to Erasmus as to John Calvin and the Anabaptists.

For consider what you know of it, and what any responsible historian would admit of it. The English puritan tradition is the direct consequence of that Lollard culture which goes back in the beginning to Wyclif. The Lollard culture was a lay culture and an educated culture. And when at length congregations formed themselves which were, according to Daniel Neal, first called 'puritan' in 1564, they were formed by people who were claiming their portion of goods, and not waiting for Mother Church to make up her mind whether they were yet fit to receive them. As Dr. Rupp again says, 'There was a new spirit abroad in the dawn of the Reformation which refused to treat grown men as babies'[3].

And the whole project hinged (3) on literacy. A man could not 'claim his portion' without some sense that it was indeed his portion; he could not read even his translated Bible without being able to read at all. He could not read it without its being printed and circulated. His demand to be able to read it was met by the translation and nourished by the circulation.

[1]Rupp: *Six Makers of English Religion* (1957) p. 15, quoting from Huizinga's *Erasmus* (1928).
[2]See Leland Miles, *John Colet and the Platonic Tradition* (1962).
[3]Rupp, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

This is a condition common to all branches of the Reformation. Luther's reformation, it is always said, depended for its success on the invention of printing: it was a function of literacy, and so were all other reformations at the time. I have not yet said anything that proves, though I have said something that suggests, the Englishness of puritanism.

What I have said so far has, however, suggested two things which I shall in a moment develop: (a) that there is a contemplative quality in puritanism which is usually overlooked, and (b) that puritanism is something very much more considerable than a form of churchmanship. But until I have laid a few more courses of bricks you will not see the structure I am trying to build.

Let me turn now to English puritanism as it developed historically. Look first at (4) its demography. It is well known that in its first two or three generations its historic leaders tended to come from London and East Anglia, and to be associated with the university of Cambridge. This was the part of England where for a century or two the mercantile wealth of the country had assembled itself: it was not the home of the old families whose standing depended on the holding of land. The puritan culture naturally appealed to the new merchants rather than to the old landed aristocracy, and the merchants' money proved to be very valuable to it.

Another quality in puritanism is (5) its insularity, its receptiveness to the Calvinist theology of salvation and its relative indifference to mission. The one great puritan enterprise in the foreign field was, quite characteristically, not a mission but an emigration —to New England: a transportation of whole families to the fulfilment of a dream of founding a new society.

Another is (6) its new interest in and interpretation of the concept of the family. It was the puritans who began the fashion of contracting it to a unit acceptably housed in a fairly small place. Your ancient aristocratic 'family' was a much more wide-ranging affair, with a traditional 'seat' in some mansion capable of accommodating, when required, many branches of it at the same time, but much less close-knit and domestic than the puritan family whose father was its king and priest. He became, in a few generations, much less the administrator, much more the economic mainspring and supporter. Puritan values were already measurable much more exclusively in terms of money than of possessions, land and persons in the aristocratic tradition.

If the puritans suspected crowd activities, is this not natural in a culture which no longer said that a castle was a man's home, but that his home was his castle? And it was crowd activities that the puritans on the whole did suspect: the taverns were a menace to the home; large-scale music-making in public was an unnecessary luxury, but the puritans often loved and extolled 'chamber music,' which at that date was precisely family music. There is all that about the maypole and the celebration of Christmas: well, if the puritans suspected these things, they suspected them fundamentally because these public activities did not find men at their best, whereas the vocations of the family did. Men are never at their best when they are in large crowds: they are, for the puritan, too impressible, too biddable, too liable to lose their independence and judgment and integrity. Nobody has, of course, proved them wrong.

But we can take this further: it is pretty well known as part of the case against the puritans that they did not care for stage-plays, and that in a general way they were greatly unimpressed by any argument for the beneficent effect of beauty on society at large. They had a very deep distrust, which goes right back to Erasmus, the Lollards and Wyclif, of what we can call with some precision 'make-believe'. It is surely very characteristic of the puritan that he refuses to believe anything under anybody else's influence (7). All his resistance to liturgy, symbolism and the visual aids to worship are a protest against the use of illiteracy in the populace to strengthen the hands of those who wished to make them believe what they were told to believe. The splendour of a cathedral, the seemliness of vestments, the decency of an episcopal order, the pleasantness of choral music were far outweighed by the dangers to man's spiritual development, and assaults on his intellectual integrity.

Puritan religion was, in other words, rational: rationality, guided by the word of Scripture, the word still recently translated into the vernacular. There is all the difference in the world between the puritan reverence for scripture as a basis for rational religion and the evangelical fundamentalist use of it as a magical source of authority. The legendary length of puritan sermons was the consequence of their refusal to make people believe things without providing the full rational justification for that belief. Their massive theological treatises are monuments of rationality[4]. Literary

[4]For example, John Owen's *Pneumatologia* and Thomas Goodwin's *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Our Regeneration.*

critics have gone both ways in either deploring or extolling the religion in 'Paradise Lost' but nobody can hope to prove that it is not there—that indeed there is not a close rational connection between every scene in that epic and the doctrines of the Christian faith as they presented themselves to Milton.

But let us pause and consider whether some equally well-known exploits of puritanism do or do not damage these contentions. On occasion puritans did act in crowds. There were the minority political movements of the 1650s; the armies and battles of the Civil War; Cromwell himself who aspired to control the whole country through parliament. What have these to do with the domestic, independent unbiddability of the puritan culture? Why, history insists that they support it. The political movements were a dead loss. Cromwell's armies were particularly well noted for the vandalisms attributed to them. The whole agonized career of Cromwell indicates that he was never for a moment unconscious of the harsh discord which the necessities of power made with the true values of puritanism. He was one of the few people who could sincerely say to those Scottish elders, 'In the bowels of Christ think it possible that you may be mistaken', for it was a thought which never gave him any personal respite. The further away he was forced to go from human dialogue, the more passionate his private dialogue with himself and with God—as his biographers, notably Dr. Robert Paul, have shown.

My contention is that violence is a deviation from puritan values; and that contention is assaulted fatally only if one takes the violence of puritan religious dissent to be the essence of puritanism. I am contending that it is not. I am contending, indeed, that puritanism is not to be understood merely through investigation of puritan dissent, or even of puritan religion. For puritanism is (8) a secular value which has religious functions, not a religious value which has secular analogues. Of that I am convinced, and it is on that ground that I am pursuing this argument. I have said that puritanism is at a deep level associated with the values of the Renaissance—and those are secular values—not pagan or Christian but secular. The great concern of puritans for (9) social righteousness—which Christians could share with non-Christians—is an example of the essential secularity of the puritan outlook. The fact that religious overtones were almost always present is an accident of an age in which it was hardly possible to profess a humanist or atheist position and be heard at all. It was, you will remember, illegal during most of the seventeenth century not to be an anglican.

No: the puritan values can be seen not only in the Cromwellian agonies but in the neoplatonist reflections: in the new revived cult of those ancient qualities of stoicism, *'ataraxia, autarkeia'* which you find in the conversation of More and his friends.

Reading the prose political works of John Milton disposes speedily of the idea (**10**) that puritanism is in any way closely associated with what we know as democracy. You will remember how little Milton thinks of that, and how powerfully, in for example his educational treatises, he pleads for the cultivation of excellence. You will also recall how Baxter in an early work repudiated any form of majority rule, even though in his later years he admitted that he had gone much too far. No: the impressive moral sense of puritanism (**11**) is an individualist sense, not a corporate sense: it is a man's conscience, the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit, the work of the Holy Spirit in a man's salvation, which a puritan regards as unassailable by any kind of corporate legalism. It is to this that he regards sociable frivolities and mob rule alike as dangers: and it is this, not the violent and rebellious puritanism, that really proved to be the chief agent in forming that English character which I think we can all agree is in our own age being subjected to a radical change and perhaps passing away.

In order to have a launching-pad for the rest of my argument, then, I am urging that the positive, not the negative, qualities of puritanism be kept in the front of our minds. I am inviting you to agree that if you say that puritanism is schismatic, unliturgical, anti-episcopal, anti-royalist, anti-aristocratic and philistine you are describing secondary qualities: while if you say that it is rational, cerebral, individualist, insular and contemplative you are concentrating on its primary qualities. For it is its rationalism, its respect for a man's right to make judgments, that produced its opposition to magic, hierarchy and liturgy in religion: it was its individualism and love of good conversation between individuals that made it unecumenical; it was its distrust of crowd-judgments that made it oligarchic and suspicious of public entertainment.

No, if one takes the broader view of the puritan culture, one will see, as the ages succeeded one another but rather (**12**) the impressive association during the eighteenth century of puritan learning with the development of natural philosophy and the new science, and the association of puritan families with the social reforms of the years just before and after 1800.

The fact is that English culture was, up to the early decades of this century, a puritan culture. We were magnificently insular and at the same time enterprising: we were changing from an old landed society to a new civic society; we were, in our middle and upper classes, sturdy and conservative churchgoers with a rational and unsacramental approach to our faith. We had a vital sense of social righteousness, and of the duty and responsibility of the privileged towards the underprivileged in our own neighbourhoods —strictly limited by the conventions of patronage by which he who received help owed obedience. We had a profound respect for the sort of worldly success which implied rectitude and respect not for land but for property—of which of course the senior Forsytes are the most massive celebration in our literature. The good life, which money could buy and capital could sustain, was certainly a matter of good conversation and peaceful culture. Art as such was something which you could afford if you kept the social rules: it wasn't something for 'the people'; the possession of works of tangible art (see the Forsytes again) was a mark of social acceptance and success. The limitations of Victorian social axioms were puritan limitations. It was unwise to question a settled social order in which rich and poor had their several obligations. Mrs. Alexander shocked nobody when she invited congregations to sing with satisfaction about the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate. Puritans were never egalitarians.

That is all obvious enough. But what has happened now? And what if any is the path of puritan values through the quite new world in which Englishmen live at present? In order to do that I propose to set up a formula. I have mentioned eight qualities in historic puritanism which I believe to be primary: (1) its rationality and respect for intellect (2) its pleasure in education and its pursuit of the contemplative virtues of the mind (3) its dependence on and fostering of literacy (4) its appeal to the new middle class of Englishmen (5) its insularity and Englishness (6) its characteristic doctrines about the human family (7) its hatred and contempt of make-believe and (8) its particular promotion of social righteousness.

I shall have made my point if I am able to show that certain values and tendencies in English society at present which contradict these values are also primary. I have lost my case if (a) I am wrong about the primary values of the puritan culture and (b) I am wrong about the primary quality of the mid-twentieth century stresses I am about to mention.

Very well then. Over against puritan rationality I place the contemporary assault on reason with which we are all familiar. Indeed, I think that the puritan love of reason, education and literacy—my first three points taken together—are quite precisely counterpoised by what has been exposed by Marshall McLuhan as the dethronement of the word. Television is the instrument of communication which assails puritanism. Radio never did—it was the zenith of the pure word's success: anybody who has written a radio script remembers with what zeal his producer checked his script for precision and verbal efficiency, and how this compares with a T.V. producer's attitude. As for education, what a puritan meant by education was an individual achievement, a costly battle against sloth and stupidity. Modern education is a human right, and society's assessment of it is a pretty clear contradiction of what it meant to Milton.

If puritanism was a middle-class culture, assimilated to the mores and temperament of a man who was not ashamed to offer a challenge to life and succeed in his encounter with it, then much modern disparagement of these values is a contradiction at that point. It is normally regarded as an insult to say that Congregational churches are middle-class; it is not my purpose here to defend their middle-classness (although to weep crocodile tears about this is hardly less vain than to insist that a dog would be far better if it were a biped): all I mean is to suggest that the disparagement of those qualities which are positive in the 'middle class', and also positive in the puritan culture, indicate a contradiction at that point.

The Common Market and the coming multi-racial society in England sufficiently dispose of my fifth point about insularity. I still make no moral judgment: I believe only that these two massive social changes are matters with which the Puritan culture is by its nature helpless to make conversation—and you won't deny that as historic changes they are primary. The mobility of society, the revolt against parental authority, the deep and by no means always futile or immoral questionings of accepted standards of behaviour, principally sexual and economic, similarly dispose of the Puritan family-centred ethos. The transfer of social efforts towards equality and justice to national level, indeed all that is implied in socialism, may be an inevitable end-product of puritan opinion but it is a denial of puritan values, which were

individualistic and which always honoured distinction and perhaps by our standards undervalued equality. (Socialism is evangelical, not puritan). And as for that remaining point about make-believe, I fancy that the completion of the movement in literature which began with the eighteenth century novelists, and ran a fairly tough obstacle race through the preacher-novelists and the satire-novelists and the social-comment novelists, and also through a long period when fiction was regarded as matter for women and never for men, but which has now brought us to the anti-novels of our present time, with their anti-heroes, written, read and avidly discussed by men, tells the required story. Indeed, the cult of irrationality in the arts, the existential ethos, the divorce of the arts from plot, line and tune, is their triumph over puritan values: within this can be subsumed also the mass-dissemination of aesthetic values, pop-culture, Albert Hall culture and everything we commonly and imprecisely mean by permissiveness. The detective novel, by the way, was the great gesture of puritan values against romanticism.

Yes: and if I am right here, something I have implied will also have to be brought out into the open. For at the religious level the real contradiction of puritanism is evangelicalism. And it is evangelicalism, and evangelical social values and aesthetic values, that show by contrast what puritan values really were. It is characteristic of evangelicalism that it loves the very crowds that puritanism hated, that it speaks to the very people whom puritanism overlooked, that it gets huge credit for filling up the defects in puritanism and (I am bound to say) is insufficiently self-critical about the losses which by these new emphases it was content for society to suffer. A great deal of the nineteenth century culture which is loosely called puritan is evangelical. It is evangelicalism, not puritanism, that is impersonal in its ways and patronizing in its manner and cultivates the art of handling large numbers of people whom the handler does not admit to a personal relation. This is not moralism: it is, I venture to say, pure and unquestionable history.

Well: I claim that the recession of puritan values can be identified, established, and admitted along these lines. But there is one more thing to say.

I think we shall find something which has not yet run away into the sand.

While most politics nowadays is very far from puritan, very much concerned with the handling of large masses of opinion, and

most politicians have to be in their public behaviour evangelical preachers, where you see points of resistance to the manipulation of mass opinion you see the puritan mind at work. Where politics in our parliament are really a matter of intelligent conversation, the puritan values are preserved: and in satirical comment such as television has promoted and many weekly journals have developed you see Marprelate, even if he has here exchanged his primitive cudgel for a more sophisticated weapon. A society that can produce this has a puritan backbone still: I doubt if puritans have traditionally had much humour, but they were historically never short of satire, and at their best they were not short of wit either. It is precisely unpuritan to withdraw from politics and from society in the manner of certain modern young: but it is puritan to resist irresponsible and impersonal demagogy and to desanctify the idols of the crowd. More seriously than that, I find a puritan value in a good deal of that theology which has been called radical. Dr. Robinson's rational and candid approach to religion has a distinct puritan streak in it. I believe that just as Richard Hoggart was right in calling Lady Chatterley's Lover a puritan book (meaning a book of protest against a certain idolatry and a plea for the destruction of certain accepted social frauds), so there is something in the Robinson Ethic—as there is in all 'situation-ethic' thinking —which owes more to puritan spirituality than to any other source. But lastly, and most seriously of all, I am persuaded that the whole system of society which has developed through the scientific to the technological is strictly puritan in its origins and its ideals. If a puritan is, as I am saying, primarily a seeker after what is there, a contemplative whose ideal is the Platonic *theoria,* then the attitude characteristic of modern science is one which he not only approves but constantly adopts.

The spirit of free enquiry disciplined not by dogma but by the object of enquiry is a direct product of puritanism—it is what the Renaissance was looking for, what violent revolutions always place in jeopardy, but what the puritan approach to life always makes possible and integrates with religion for those who have not been goaded by over-dogmatic religion into apostasy or apathy.

Is it fantastic even to say the same of technology? Again we come back to our question about what is real and what is accidental in puritanism. Is all this new dispensation which seeks to remove, not superstition from life (science's job) but pain, discomfort and useless fatigue from life something which your rugged

puritan could possibly approve? Is it essential to puritanism to glorify work for work's sake and discomfort for discomfort's sake? Well, if the puritan is what he is usually taken to be, obviously he is against all this because he enjoys being uncomfortable and laborious. And if that is the truth about him, then I am altogether wrong and have lost my case. But my contention is that this narrow and distorted view of puritanism is the result of identifying the puritan culture with a religion appropriate to a pre-technological age, and of saying that if you separate it from that religion, which must needs make the best of plague and infant mortality and poverty, you kill it. If on the contrary puritanism is to be identified not with the religion of the seventeenth century but with the constantly-revealed Gospel which embraces all mortal change and remains itself unchanged, why then you need not even call it religious. I think myself that it is the most characteristically English manifestation of the faith of a pilgrim people, and that it has something to say, and can say it through contemporary secular man at his best and contemporary Christians at theirs, to which even this age, perhaps especially this age, will respond. For it is the faith of free men, and heaven knows it is only fourteen years to Orwell's millennium.

ERIK ROUTLEY

CHAPEL HISTORIES RECEIVED

A History of Congregationalism at Patricroft (1970) by Ian H. Wallace is more interesting than most, being related to social and ecclesiastical movements. It suffers from total lack of illustration. Patricroft, by the way, is in Eccles.

Illustration is the superb quality of Edmund Banyard's story of Stowmarket Church, *The First 300 Years*. Anyone planning a local history for popular consumption should take a good look at the 32 cartoons and pictures. The portrait of the Rev. Eric Weir, steel-helmeted, among the wrecked timbers of the church in 1941, has top marks. This face tells us what war meant to the churches and with what resolution they faced things. It must not be lost.

A Brief Record of the Congregational Church assembling at Gainsborough (1970) comprises some duplicated notes about the chief events in dissenting history leading up to the Huntingdon church of 1780 and its subsequent passage as an Independent church. It was compiled by Miss C. Anwyl.

COVENANT DECLARATION AND RULES OF A SUSSEX VILLAGE CHURCH

Mr. Surman's interesting article about the Taunton Covenant of 1654 (*Transactions*, xx. No. 4) brought to mind for the writer some of the Covenant Declarations of Sussex village churches of later date. One of these is that of the Congregational Church at Wisborough Green in the Western Division of the County which came to light in the Register of Births and Baptisms—another illustration of the value of many of the Non Parochial Registers as sources of church history going well beyond the expected data on births, baptisms and deaths.

The first definite evidence of a Congregational cause at Wisborough Green is dated August 1753 when a meeting was registered under the Toleration Act; the family providing the meeting place later had strong Congregational connections. The cause registered in March 1770 was served by Thomas Linnett, later Congregational Minister at Oakham, Rutland. In November 1775, the Congregational Fund Minutes recorded:

Ordered to the Church at Wisboro' Green, Sussex £4
and this grant was renewed in 1776 and 1780.

In February 1814, another meeting was registered and this appears to have been the immediate forerunner of the cause formed in 1815. The foundation meeting was held on 17th May 1815 and the Covenant Declaration was recorded in the Register:

> We the undermentioned Friends at Wisborough Green in the County of Sussex, Protestant Dissenters of the Independent Denomination meet to communicate to each other what great things the Lord hath done for our Souls. The Rev. J. Chamberlain being present. Maintaining the important Doctrins of the Three equal Persons in the Godhead, Eternal and Personal Election, Original Sin, Full Justification by the Imputed Righteousness of Christ, Efficacious Grace in Regeneration, the Final Perseverance of the Saints, the Resurrection of the Dead, the Future Judgment, and the Eternal Misery of such as die in their Sins; these are the Doctrins we believe, and are willing to subscribe our Names as follows.

Six men and three women signed the Declaration; six more members subscribed to it during the next three weeks. The Covenant was a very lengthy statement containing eight doctrinal articles all strongly stressing the orthodox Trinitarian and Calvinist position; it is too lengthy to reproduce here. It was prefaced:

> We who desire to walk in the fear of the Lord do, through the assistance of his Holy Spirit desire solemnly and in the presence of God, Angels, and each other, under a sense of our unworthiness, to give up ourselves to the Lord in a Church state according to the institution of Jesus Christ who we possess our prophet to teach, our priest to justify us, and save us.

The eighth article must strike a stern and gloomy note to latter day Congregationalists:

> They who, after every warning, die in their sins, will be cast into hell, where their torments never, never end, to which they will be justly doomed in the day of judgment.

The Rules of the Church were adopted at a later date—possibly in 1827 when a membership roll was compiled listing twelve men and twelve women in all. The Rules were brief and to the point:

Rules of the Church of Christ Assembling at Wisboro' Green Chapel

I. That this Christian Church shall be a voluntary Society of Persons, united for their Spiritual Edification and mutual benefit, under the Order commonly called Congregational or Calvinistic Independents.

II. The Officers of this Church shall be the Pastor and Deacons.

III. Persons to be admitted as Members of this Church are those only who subscribe to the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, and the Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines; and who hold the Moral Law as a Rule of Life.

IV. Any person desirous of becoming a Member of this Christian Society shall signify it to the Pastor who shall mention it to the Church when two of the members shall be appointed to converse with the person, and if the evidence of his or her conversation be deemed satisfactory, the admission may take place by a vote of the Church and the approbation of the Pastor.

V. That persons thus admitted to this Christian Society shall be expected to submit to such Discipline as the Church may think proper to adopt for the preservation of its purity and peace.

Unhappily, the Congregational cause at Wisborough Green never developed strongly in spite of many efforts on its behalf by the Home Missionary Society and it became an out-station of Billingshurst where there was a vigorous Congregational Church.

N. CAPLAN

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

The Baptist Quarterly, Vol. XXIII, Nos. 6-7 (April, July 1970). In the first number D. B. Murray writes on 'Baptists in Scotland before 1869' and Dr. Ernest Payne on Joseph Proud. The second number has Dr. Stephen Mayor's address to the Baptist Society entitled, 'The Free Church Understanding of the Ministry in the Twentieth Century.' In both issues runs a serial of a most interesting and enjoyable kind, the diary a young missionary wife kept on the voyage to India aboard the "Jessie Logan" in 1840. 'The Journal of Jane Parsons' conveys the experiences of a sailing ship passenger and the feelings and sentiments of an ordinary but raw missionary reliably, vividly and movingly.

The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society, Vol. 52, No. 2 (1969) contains the President, W. H. Marwick's paper, 'Quakers in Victorian Scotland'; S. Frick's 'The Quaker Deputation to Russia, 1854'; and E. J. Evans on the Friends and Tithes, 1690-1730.

The Presbyterian Historical Society's *Journal,* Vol. XIV, No. 2 (1969) has a detailed article by one of the editors, J. Johansen-Berg, on 'Arian or Arminian,' a further study of the complex theological divisions of the eighteenth century. R. J. Watson writes on 'Presbyterian Day Schools.'

The Wesley Historical Society's *Proceedings,* Vol. XXXVII, Parts 4-5 (Feb., June, 1970) prints some changes made by Augustus Toplady to the Wesleys' hymns in the interest of truth or Calvinism, contributed by George Lawton. There is also a table of Wesley's early sermons in Part 4. Part 5 has the story of the introduction of an organ into a Leeds church in the second quarter of the last century and the secession that resulted, by John T. Hughes; 'John Wesley's Introduction to William Law' by Frederick Hunter; 'Discord in Modern Methodism' by B. S. Turner.

THE ANGLICAN PRAYER BOOK AND THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION

Dr. A. E. Peaston devotes a chapter of his book on 'The Prayer Book Tradition in the Free Churches' to a consideration of the use of the Anglican liturgy in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. This, he concludes, was a general feature of Connexional Chapels during the Countess's life, but one which they were free to abandon after her death in 1791.[1] New sources, however, provide the basis upon which a more detailed analysis of this feature of the Connexion's life may be attempted, and they compel a modification of the clear-cut position laid down by Dr. Peaston. The author is grateful to Cheshunt College for the use of their records. Whatever impact the Countess's death may have had upon other aspects of the life for her Connexion, it does not appear to have been an instantly deciding factor in the retention or abandonment of the Prayer Book; neither before not after the Countess's death was there full uniformity of procedure throughout the Connexion.

There is, of course, good evidence of chapels employing the liturgy during Lady Huntingdon's lifetime. This was most obviously the case in the Connexion's major chapels—as at Bath in the 1780's, where a clergyman was permanently employed for the reading of prayers; though he was expected to preach at times when the Chapel was otherwise unsupplied, this was clearly only a subsidiary function.[2] Though no evidence has survived of other chapels engaging a man in this capacity, a proper reading of the prayers was evidently still considered important in lesser areas. John Williams, Pantycelyn's son, who was master of the Countess's College at Trevecca in the late 1780's, wrote in 1788 that the student Alexander McDougal would be well suited to supply the chapel at Monmouth, provided he was able to manage the Church service.[3] Other references to the use of the Prayer Book at smaller Connexional chapels are frequent. We learn, for example, of it being employed 'in agreement with Lady Huntingdon's wishes' at the opening of the Wigan chapel in 1785, and there are references to its use at places as far apart as Guernsey, Brecon and Dover, in

[1]A. E. Peaston, *The Prayer Book Tradition in the Free Churches*, Chapter IV.
[2]*Cheshunt College, Cambridge MSS.*, 0715 and 0717.
[3]*Cheshunt MS.*, 1991.

the same period[4]. Some quarters, indeed, seem to have regarded the use of the liturgy as a natural concomitant of membership of the Connexion. Thus the trustees of the Independent chapel at Rotherhithe, seeking to place it under the Countess's protection in 1783, stated that they believed the chapel would be crowded if supplied by the Connexion's ministers and employing the Church services.[5] This remark is significant, since it suggests a powerful additional motive for the use of Anglican forms: the respectability which they gave to the Connexion's services. The claim of the Connexion (and of many of the leaders of the Revival), merely to be re-asserting the true doctrines of the Established Church, was more easily defended when the services of that Church formed the basis of its public worship. 'Many will attend if the Church prayers are used,' wrote the steward of the Chapel at Coleford in 1789, 'who do not, because they think we dissent from her doctrines because we use extempore service'.[6] Another striking example of how important this could be, was the case of the young William Roby who was only persuaded to attend the chapel at Wigan when assured that the Church service would be read with propriety. This led to Roby's conversion to evangelicalism, and he was later, as minister of the Grosvenor Street Chapel in Manchester, to be one of the Connexion's most significant contributions to Nonconformity in Lancashire.[7] The Prayer Book gave respectability and it also provided a guarantee of doctrinal orthodoxy, both Trinitarian and Calvinistic. The reformers of the Liturgy were now no longer Puritan divines, but Arians and Radicals—or Wesleyans embarrassed at the Calvinism of the Church's Articles.[8] Illustrative of such considerations was the belief of the Committee of the Wolverhampton Chapel in 1792, that the use of the Prayer Book would provide an effective bastion against a Nestorian minority in their congregation.[9]

Frequent though the references are to chapels where the Liturgy was employed, however, there are also indications that this was not the situation everywhere. We have referred already to the chapel at Coleford where free prayer was in use until 1789, and the remark in a letter from Worcester in 1787, that 'as we have

[4]B. Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity* (1892), iv, 76. *Cheshunt MS.*, 0699 and 0845; 2138.
[5]*Cheshunt MS.*, 1901.
[6]Ibid. 0818.
[7]Robert Halley, *Lancashire Puritanism and Nonconformity* (1869), ii, 451.
[8]This point is developed in Dr. J. D. Walsh's forthcoming book, *The Theology of the Evangelical Revival.*
[9]*Cheshunt MS.*, 0986.

the Church service used, the person who comes to supply should be one who can read well', clearly indicates that it was not in use everywhere. The situation at Worcester was, indeed, a strange one—when Thomas Wills, nephew by marriage of Lady Huntingdon, had visited the chapel in 1783, he had added the use of free prayer to the liturgy for the first time. This led to the abandonment of the Prayer Book, altogether, an experiment that was evidently not very successful, for when he visited the city again, in 1785, his Journal records the decision to introduce the church prayers for a year, to remove the prejudices of the church people against coming to chapel.[10] Interesting, too, is the evidence from Norwich in 1783 of the use of free prayer or liturgy, according to the wishes of the minister there at the time. What is noticeable in this latter case, though, is the chapel committee's evident preference for extempore forms, especially at a time when they were drawing members from the dissenting meeting. This varied practice within the Connexion is a reflection of its peculiar middle-position between Anglicanism and Dissent—congregations might be formed from dissatisfied Anglicans or dissatisfied Dissenters, and forms of worship would be affected accordingly. Not, indeed, that all the Connexion's Anglican clergy were inevitably wedded to the Prayer Book—the remark in November 1775 by Henry Peckwell, a protégé of Lady Glenorchy who had joined the Countess in 1772, that prayers had been read at the opening of the Maidstone Chapel 'to please the prejudices of the people who are very bigotted to the Church of England', hardly suggests great loyalty to its forms.[11]

The death of the Countess in 1791 removed a powerful supporter of the Prayer Book, but does not seem to have heralded its immediate abandonment. The introduction of the Prayers at Wolverhampton, that we have mentioned, did not take place until 1792, and as late as 1799, Thomas Haweis, Rector of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, and one of the four trustees to whom the Connexion passed, was referring to the Prayer Book's use 'in all principal chapels of the Connexion'.[12] The Countess's death, indeed, had not meant a slackening of authoritarian control within the Connexion, but merely the transition of power into the hands of its trustees. The question of the retention of the Prayer

[10]*Cheshunt MS.*, 0658. *Memoir of the Life of the Rev. Thomas Wills*, (1804), 117 and 153.
[11]*Cheshunt MS.*, 0339.
[12]Thomas Haweis, *A Succinct and Impartial History of the Church of Christ*, (published 1800), iv, 268.

Book thus became linked with the wider issues of continued Connexional membership, and was subordinated, as it had always been, to local considerations. Thus the chapel at Wigan gave up the Prayer Book in 1800, when its congregation, growing tired of the change of ministers which membership of the Connexion involved, left to become fully independent. A parallel situation occurred at Preston about the same time, where the change to independency was marked by the abandonment of the Prayer Book. There were, of course, chapels where its use continued (and still continues), and others where it was retained for a long period—as at Ashbourne in Derbyshire, where the Prayer Book was only given up on the Chapel's combination with the Congregationalists in 1872.[13] For many, however, the Prayer Book symbolised the anomaly of the Connexion's position between Anglicanism and Dissent. The Prayer Book was no longer enough to guarantee respectability to Anglicans in an age more concerned for regularity and church order, while the very minor modifications which had been wrought at the time of Secession from the Church of England —the omission of the absolution and the prayer for the bishops —were not sufficient to gain the approval of regular dissenters. Thus John Adams, an early Trevecca student who had settled with a dissenting congregation in Salisbury, complained to the Countess in 1784 that the changes were trivial and gave to the Secession the appearance of 'a forced work'.[14] It is probable that Robert Halley's analysis of the fate of liturgical chapels in Lancashire holds good of the country at large—these, he said, were popular for a time, but then their congregations would either go back to the Church or into Dissent. Thus, by the time he was writing in 1869, Rochdale was the only Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in the county still to retain its original character and formularies.[15] Lady Huntingdon had united together many diverse elements within 18th Century English religion—herein lay the original strength of her Connexion, but it carried with it the seeds of dissolution as these groups returned whence they had come. In this process, the retention or abandonment of the Anglican Prayer Book is but one factor among many. An analysis of these must wait, however, for a full study of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.

ALAN HARDING

[13] *150th Anniversary Booklet of the Sion Chapel, Ashbourne*, page 5. I am grateful to Mr. J. Oakden of Ashbourne, for lending me his copy of this.
[14] *Cheshunt MS.*, 1927. The nature of worship at those churches of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion which retained the Prayer Book into the present century, is described by Dr. Peaston, *op. cit.*, 69.
[15] Robert Halley, *op. cit.*, ii, 437-8 and note.

SOME JOHN PYE SMITH LETTERS

The Pye Smith family still possess some correspondence of their illustrious ancestor, who was Principal of Homerton College, 1806-1851 and also Pastor of Old Gravel Pit Chapel, 1802-1849. We are grateful to Miss Mary Pye Smith for letting us read and copy parts of them. Most are mundane, to do with property. They were written to a brother in the Sheffield area who managed farms for the family. John depended on this source for the support of his family, despite his two London appointments, and yet from time to time was in debt. 'I have been obliged to borrow £120 to carry on my necessary expenditure,' he writes when rents had not come through in 1823. Again the next year, 'I have not had even money for necessary household expenses, or to pay the butcher and baker.'

John's sons were certainly very expensive. A letter to his brother dated Sept. 28, 1829 makes this clear:

> Ebenezer has been at home since his apprenticeship expired in July, but attending the Infirmary for Diseases of the *Eye*. This week he goes to be what is called a Dresser at Guy's Hospital: that is to perform all surgical duties to a certain number of patients, under the direction of one of the Surgeons. This will last a year: for it we have to pay at the outset £52 10s.; and, as he must be always within call, we have taken apartments for him near the Hospital, where he must lodge and live. Hospital fees and lectures for the last two years have cost nearly £90.
>
> His whole professional expenditure, including the £52 10s., which I expect to pay in one or two days, has amounted to £485: and Mr. Ashwell, his late Master, said it would cost £1,000, to complete his medical education. John's legal education *so far* has cost above £540: & the difficulties of his finally getting into practice are apprehended to be greater.

Dr. Pye Smith aspired to great things for his sons! No doubt he also aspired to great things for the countless students that passed through his hands. He gave them the latest in science and theology. He became not only a D.D., but an F.R.S.

It is not fantastic to conjecture that Charles Darwin was acquainted with Pye Smith and his geological-biblical studies, and that Pye Smith knew what Darwin was about. There is an undated letter from Mrs. Charles Darwin from Down, Bromley, Kent, enclosing a subscription towards a certain student:

> As Dr. Pye Smith has kindly consented to receive subscriptions for Mr. John Dufrene Mrs. Charles Darwin ventures

to trouble him with £1 for that purpose. She begs to apologize for sending it in the form of a Post Office order, but as she is living in the country she has no other way of conveying it safely. Mrs. Darwin hopes that by fixing of the Hackney Post Office she has done what is most convenient to Dr. Pye Smith though she fears it will necessarily give him some trouble.

It was in the years immediately following Pye Smith's death that Mrs. Margaret Oliphant was writing her novel (imitation Brontë?), *Salem Chapel*, whose dashing hero is a dissenting minister straight from college, full of airs and graces and overflowing with knowledge, who falls for one above his station. Which college does he come from? 'omerton! The novelist is no more sympathetic to dissenters than Charles Dickens, but she is probably not wrong about the social climbing capacities of suburban dissenters in the age of political reforms. These letters full of financial strains are evidence from fact, as opposed to fiction.

There are just two other letters worth quoting and they are on very different topics. One, June 8, 1820, is about wretched Queen Caroline. 'The Queen entered Westminster on Tuesday evening, surrounded by applauding thousands who almost forced her carriage . . . I see nothing of these things working quietly in my study* . . . It has been a most lamentable imprudence in her to live so long out of England, & in the way that she has done.' Pye Smith hopes the charges brought against her are false, though he admits that she has always been 'blameably careless about appearances.' He does not envy George IV, 'a stranger to all domestic happiness.' At that time he would not have known that the king was in fact married to two women.

The other letter, written in 1826, is giving advice to someone who wonders about collecting money for a chapel. He had been asked, it seems, if he had heard of a Mr. Jefferson collecting for Loxley Chapel. He had not. He pitied men who did. It was very hard—'the perpetual (alas!) & heartbreaking plan of personal solicitation.' First he must get the consent of the Congregational Board which vetted the Trust proposed. If the deed was found unobjectionable 'then the Board recommend the case and the hapless minister takes his chance, among the constant number, in the melancholy toil of London-begging.'

JOHN H. TAYLOR

*The hero of *Salem Chapel* gets into trouble for following the Principal's example and spending his time in the study rather than getting among the people.

GROWTH AND DECAY

Castle Donington

Letter from J. B. Paton, Nottingham, to Mr. Bannister

(Wilson Collection)

Nottingham, Oct. 3rd, 1871

My dear Mr. Bannister,

I am happy to state to you the conclusions I have formed after my recent visit to Castle Donington, and after considering fully the facts that came under my own observation and which were laid before me by yourself and a leading member of the Baptist Church (who kindly gave us exact information on all points on which we made enquiry).

Let me state these facts: — The Chapel is a solid, handsome country Chapel, capable of seating 300 people, but with walls strong enough to support galleries all round. With galleries the chapel would hold 550 people. The pews are somewhat old fashioned, but are in good repair. There are also two good School Rooms and a Vestry, with suitable furniture.

This Chapel was erected in the year 1840 and stands in a central position with a good frontage and a wide commanding entrance from one of the main streets. There is also a small graveyard at the back.

The entire cost of the Chapel and Land was £1,400. £350 for which the property may now be re-purchased is, I consider, about one-half its real value.

The population of Castle Donington now numbers 2,500. Since the railway was opened and a silk factory erected in the town, the population has been growing and is likely to increase, though but slowly.

There are two villages containing about 700 people, within half-an-hour's walk from Castle Donington.

There are two Episcopalian Churches for this population, at both of which not more than 150 people attend. There is also a Wesleyan and a Baptist Chapel at Castle Donington, and a small Reform Chapel in one of the villages referred to. In all I learnt that about 550 people out of the 3,200 attend public worship, and the need of active visitation among the people is deeply felt.

Formerly Kegworth was united with Castle Donington, one minister supplying both places; now, both these places are deserted by us.

In considering these facts, I hail the opportunity now afforded the Independent body of again occupying deserted ground. At the same time it would be absurd to erect Castle Donington into an "Independent" Station or Church, at which an Agent would need to be supported from foreign sources. But Melbourne is only 3½ miles distant, and as you are willing to take the pastoral oversight of Castle Donington, and would devote some time to visitation there, I believe a congregation would be immediately raised that could easily defray the expenses of a weekly visit from a Student of the Congregational Institute. If, therefore, the Chapel and Schools can now be redeemed, the whole agency needful to work the place will involve no further expense to friends at a distance.

I cannot close this letter without expressing to you my grateful sense of your service in this matter. You are engaged in the great undertaking of erecting a new Chapel and Schools at Melbourne, where our church has been so long crippled for want of a suitable Chapel; and now you have this additional burden put upon you. You have not sought it; I rejoice that you have not shunned it, as many would. It will be an honour to you to erect a Chapel at Melbourne, and see it opened free of debt, as I believe you will. It will be more than a double honour to redeem, by the aid of kind and liberal friends, a good Chapel, and to re-occupy ground where we laboured once, and where we are, I think, called by Providence to labour again.

With kind regards,

My dear Mr. Bannister,

Yours faithfully,

J. B. PATON

N.B. Henry John Bannister, Minister, Melbourne, Derbs., 1870-1905

Cambridge Heath Congregational Church

Letter from F. Brown to Andrew Mearns, Secretary of the London Congregational Union (L.C.U. Records).

"Brooklyn,"
1 Thistlewaite Road
Lower Clapton, N.E.
May 19, 1904

Dear Mr. Mearns,

I trust you will not consider me intrusive if I venture a few observations which may be of service in your interview with the Church Officers on Sunday next. There is a fine building in a prominent position. It has been erected only 40 years, but shows externally needs for structural repair. The membership which at one time stood at over 600, has all but vanished, Finance corresponding. The position is deplorable and a grief to every loyal Congregationalist. Is it recoverable? Under present control, I regard that as most unlikely. Change in the character of service appears to be the demand of the neighbourhood, but to meet the requirements of the surrounding population, there are *numerous* places of assembly, some of them with vigorous organizations. There are, I *think* within a radius of ½ mile from C.H.C.C. as a centre, no less than 28 places of religious service. 18 are run on Free Church lines, and adopt what are termed Evangelistic efforts. Some of them are finding great difficulties in *finance,* and all are lamenting the paucity of general attendance. I remember the opening of most of the buildings, the character of the population creating the demand. Hackney then was a flourishing Nonconformist District. The people who made up our large and useful congregations have removed; the houses they occupied are now in the hands of Jews, and of working people who let. Unless a great change comes over our working population, we shall be compelled to strengthen our free church forces by *amalgamation,* and by the adoption of a *more popular form of public* ministry. May God grant you the wisdom of discernment and the tact of re-arrangement.

Yours truly,

FREDERICK BROWN

NOTE: The first letter was contributed by Charles E Surman and the second by the Editor.